DOG CORNER PAPERS

ESSAYS FROM 'THE PIPER'

WILLIAM WHITMAN, 3*d*

$1.50

DOG CORNER PAPERS

By William Whitman, 3d

For some time past there has been an increasing demand for a collection of the sprightly essays by the editor that have been a feature of Houghton Mifflin Company's monthly bulletin, The Piper. These thumb-nail sketches of life at Dog Corner, of the exploits of the irrepressible Anne; Michael, the dog; Olive, the Ford; and all the other homely and humorous incidents that make up life in the country, have gained friends by their lively humor and their mellow philosophy.

Gathered together in book form, gaily bound and whimsically illustrated, they will be enjoyed not only by readers of The Piper but by all who like light and deftly turned essays.

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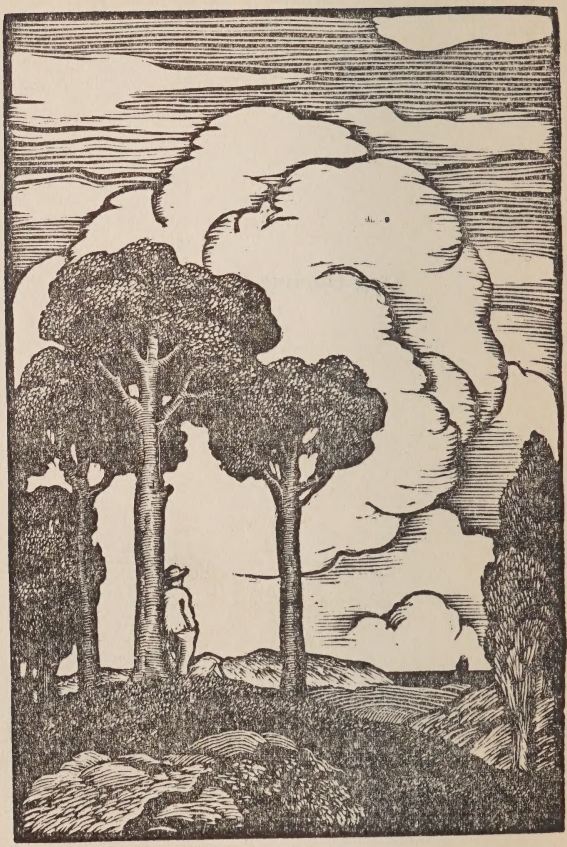

DOG CORNER PAPERS

Reprinted from 'THE PIPER'

By WILLIAM WHITMAN, *3d*

WOODCUT DECORATIONS BY
THOMAS W. NASON

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TO

R. N. L.

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DOG CORNER

We have just moved into the country which borders town, my wife, myself, my daughter Anne, and Michael, our Irish terrier. We are the Lairds of almost seventeen ancestral acres, a house, and several apple trees, all situated on Dog Corner, where we keep company with a rather rumpled macadam road and five giant elms which branch above us with wistful superiority. Our house stands out from the houses which range themselves south and north by its lack of pretentiousness and vulgarity. It is small and white and was built almost a hundred years ago; it is a house one turns to when one returns to the soil, or a small back garden of it.

The thing we liked best about our house was the thing which wrung our hearts most severely — the library. In a room little bigger than an enlarged closet we found it necessary to store all our books. At this point we consulted a carpenter, who generously consented to help us out of our difficulties for the sum of ten dollars or more a day, and costs. How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!

We encountered another difficulty when the shelves were put up and stained, the rug laid and the easy chair pushed by the table conveniently near the lamp, cigarettes, pipe and ash tray. We found it almost impossible to decide where the books should be placed. Should we arrange them by size, by subject, or by color? Like the duck-billed platypus of Oliver Herford, we could not decide whether to be fish, flesh, or fowl, so chose all three. When the shelves allowed, we arranged the books by subject — when not, we distributed them

according to size, with an eye to color. This system has its advantages — it lends an atmosphere of rich disarray. The librarian who knows his own maze and is able to turn almost instantly to any required volume directs the winds of destiny!

Our library is a refuge for Lotus-Eaters. The radio has been removed from its table to another hemisphere, and the telephone disconnected! Even the little activities of our housekeeping echo distantly through the closed door and the vehicles passing in the street outside the window 'Far, far away did seem to mourn and rave on alien shores.' Here at least for a moment the prisoner is free.

The awful pleasures of freedom! I contrast them humorously with the new hot water boiler which pours a tepid, maroon liquid into our tub; of the last flat tire to which Olive, our Ford, blew us; and of the desire we have and may not gratify, to wander along the rivers and through the forests of Africa. Freedom, alas, is only a

relative term; we may not even free our thoughts from bondage. The art of living, I have come to believe, is an art of adjustment so that life in its infinite variety may flourish and grow rich.

Yesterday a hurdy-gurdy serenaded our house, to the keen delight of Anne, who should have been in bed, and who was discovered half way out the window 'in search of fresh air,' as she explained to her mother, and to the boundless enthusiasm of our Irish terrier.

There is a poignant meaning to such music which never fails to stir my emotions. Sentimental, discordant, it is nevertheless an eloquent summary of life, through an elemental appeal to the sense of rhythm within us. When the hurdy-gurdy plays, children dance and dogs bark. Havelock Ellis may well speak of 'the dance of life.'

Take gray-eyed Anne, for instance. When she wakes in the early morning, long before either her mother or I open our re-

sentful eyes, she rises and dances on her bed out of the fullness of her heart. They are crude steps unlike the precise weavings of a ballet, but vigorous and light-hearted, usually accompanied by song and unintelligible words. And when Anne's pink cheeks are hot with wrath she expresses herself with short, war-like prances that shake the tears out of her eyes. Then there is an evening, one might almost say (but for the fact that she is still very small) devotional dance, which she reserves for her mother. Anne dances when she is hungry or excited, when she is shy (very dignified then, spreading her skirts like a self-conscious peacock), or when she is bold. In fact I can think of few emotions which Anne, our short-legged Terpsichore, does not express in rhythmic motion.

So much has been written and said within the last few years about dancing that one can only reflect with amusement on the vicious absurdity of most of it.

Moral reform, particularly that exercised on others, is a particularly disagreeable form of tainted innocence. Therefore, when my wife pointed out to me that Anne's steps were apparently patterned more in the spirit of to-day than in the fashions of yesterday, I rose and exhibited to my astonished family a medley interpretation of the 'Charleston' and 'Black Bottom.'

ANNE'S ANNULATE

This is an autumn idyl, a tale redolent of loam and life. In its small way it is a lyric incident symbolical of man's emergence and return to dust. It concerns Dog Corner, my charming daughter Anne, her mother, Margaretta, and her grandmother. At the time Margaretta was ill in bed, and her grandmother, who was staying with us, took Anne out into the garden to spade the last of the autumn dahlias before winter put its chill seal upon the garden. My wife, conscious of this bucolic pastime, thought tenderly as she lay in bed of her daughter already taking an active interest in the world which lay so inviting at her small feet.

Grandmother, working about the plants, turned over in the rich loam a naked, blushing worm. This denizen of the demi-world she laid on the bank, intending to exhibit it to her small granddaughter's respectful and admiring gaze. She went

on, however, with her spading, unconscious of the amorous scene which was to shake her faith in human nature. Suddenly she heard behind her the following ecstatic exhortations: 'Darling worm. Darling worm.'

Grandmother turned in time to see small Anne tenderly embracing the worm and implanting impassioned kisses on its insensitive and rhythmic brow. In her desire to curb the ardor of Anne's somewhat violent affection, Grandmother suggested with guile that she show the fascinating thing to her mother.

Anne was charmed. No service, however little, seemed unworthy of her mother. Clasping the worm she advanced upon the house. Through the door and up the stairs she went with the worm in one small closed fist. When she reached the head of the stairs she called 'Ma, see. Ma, see,' and trundled rapidly towards the bed in which her mother lay absorbed in the breathless artistry of a shilling shocker.

Anne: 'See, see. Glass' (*or a word suspiciously like it*).

Margaretta: 'Let mother see.'

Anne: 'See.' (*Here Anne placed her small hand tenderly in her mother's unsuspecting one, and then opened it confidentially.*)

Margaretta (*barely able to suppress a scream as the worm slithers into her hand*): 'It's simply lovely.'

Anne (*enraptured*): 'Nice worm. See nice worm.' (*Again she sought to embrace the annulate.*)

Margaretta (*desperately*): 'Poor worm, he looks tired. Anne, don't you think the sweet worm wants to go back and see his mother?'

Anne debated the logic of this request, once more hugged the worm to her bosom, and, with a sigh of regret, descended the stairs to the garden.

Here she informed her grandmother: 'Worm see Ma?'

Together they laid the pulsing form in a fallow trough. The worm gathered his

blind articulations into a knot, insinuated himself into a clod, and so fled out of sight. Anne was hurt at his ungracious exit, but the thought that the worm was going home to have bread and milk and to be put to bed by his mother consoled her for an otherwise tragic parting. She realized vaguely that he must be very tired.

This little story gives me pause to contemplate worms. Worms, if we can judge by their behavior and draw inferences from a single example, have an intense desire for bed and bread and milk and the dark comfort of mother nature. In 'The Dance of Life,' one of the most stimulating books of the decade, Havelock Ellis speaks of our modern classico-mathematical renaissance in which life moves to mysterious and beautiful rhythms of which dancing is the most complete expression. From the egress of the worm from the sod to his final return, his was a beautiful and rhythmic experience close to the heart of nature. The odyssey of Anne's annulate typifies,

I think, the life of man, his bewildering emergence from darkness, his dazzling journey through the unfamiliar valley of life, and his inevitable return to everlasting obscurity. Borne on the wings of a strange destiny, this humble worm may well represent that 'new spirit' which achieves its highest expression through the delight and pity of Anne, Goddess of Terpsichore, for of such is the dance of life.

AUTUMNAL ENGLAND

London is a long way from Dog Corner and the white house we live in, as far away almost as the memory of another smaller house in Chelsea, London, where Margaretta and I first started housekeeping shortly after our marriage. We discovered it riding in a taxicab on a general tour of the neighborhood in which we wished to live, and to the amusement of our driver hurried immediately to the broker whose sign 'To Let' hung conspicuously over the front door. It was a small house, only eight rooms in all, built long ago in the days of Queen Anne, and occupied by an artist and his wife during three or four months of the year. Not far away Carlyle had lived; Whistler, Turner, and a host of others. At the end of the street flowed the Thames, bordered by the trees of Battersea Park and spanned by Battersea Bridge. . .

It was not long after this that we acquired Michael, our Irish terrier. Strat-

ford-on-Avon may be the birthplace of Shakespeare, but to us it has greater significance as the birthplace of Michael, and as such we think tenderly of an otherwise rather dull little English village with an appalling train service, and one or two lovely old houses. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* On our return journey Michael slept on his yellow back, paws crossed like a crusader, all the way up to London in Margaretta's lap, and that night like a miniature David his small voice not only slaughtered sleep but woke the philistines next door, who descended into the street at three in the morning and hoarsely inquired of our uncommunicative windows if we owned a dog.

I remember vividly rich autumn afternoons in Battersea Park rolling Michael over and over in the red-brown leaves which he particularly chose to play in, and then at the conclusion of the exercise period dragging him with all four feet braced in protest back across Battersea Bridge to

Cheyne Row. For Michael was at the unhappy stage in his development when on the leash he would only willingly go backwards like an obstinate brown crab.

Later in the autumn the fogs would curl up from the Thames embankment in dun-colored clouds of smoke, and the little house, cold, and alas, I confess, at times cheerless, would fill with the thick vapor so that we went choking about. Perhaps it was this, perhaps simply the spirit of wandering which led us to leave Michael to the care of our lovable old housekeeper and visit the Forest of Savernake.

Our destination proved to be a railroad station lying between two hills. About a quarter of a mile away in the half light we could see a heavy brown English house with a hedge about it. Of inhabitants, beyond the station master, there was no sign, and on inquiring for the nearest inn, we were directed to this lonesome building in the English plain. Summoning our courage, I took the one bag and we made our

pilgrimage across the tracks and up the road to the house, where, after a short time, we were able to rouse the landlord and get a room. That night we dined on cold roast beef and boiled potatoes, with a cheery flagon of English ale.

The next morning, seeking broader pastures to conquer, we took our tea basket, purchased with pride in London not long before, and meandered up the road. About a half a mile beyond a hedge-bound bend in the narrow highway we came upon a low thatched cottage with a small sign in the window — 'Car to Hire.' We knocked at the door. A pleasant, red-faced man appeared and we questioned him about prices and the general lay of the country. He told us that the great Druidic ruin of Stonehenge was about forty or more miles away and that he would gladly take us for the sum of a shilling a mile. Margaretta and I were charmed. The man went indoors to get his cap and soon we were in the garage, a thatched barn of pink stucco

in the rear of the house, where there slept in the easy peace of old age a Ford which must have been built previous to 1910. It was a noble car: the brass radiator was burnished and shining, the top was down, frayed but resolute. A sense of lordly ease and a realization that future economy would be necessary, elevated and chastened our spirits to a sweet humility as we ensconced ourselves in the back and threw the tattered robe over our knees. With a sputtering roar the journey commenced.

For a long time we drove through small villages in a country well wooded and broken up into fields by hedges and stone walls. The road was narrow but good, and Margaretta and I were particularly charmed by the old stone churches with their little burying grounds shadowed by dark green yew trees, the thatched farm houses, the neat barns and byres. At times we came upon the lush, slowly moving stream of the Avon River which reminded

me with an intense pleasure of paintings that I had seen by Constable. About eleven o'clock we came upon Salisbury Plain and soon after reached the fenced-in ruins of Stonehenge itself.

After visiting Stonehenge, we turned and made in the direction of Old Sarum. Our first view of the place was a large mound of turf rising from the hill on which the old town is situated. It was my first experience in coming upon old fortifications and an extremely vivid one. Margaretta and I scrambled up the ramparts and down into the moat, where we sat dreaming of the Middle Ages and basking in the warm sun, out of the chilly autumn wind.

After lunch, we climbed to the top of the fort itself, where men were busy excavating the old castle which once had crowned the summit. We were met at the entrance by a charming and completely affable Bassett hound (at least, that is what his master later called him) and were led by this

amiable beast like the mediæval fairy tale into the center of the fortress. Here we traced among the bleached stones the buildings which had once commanded the height, or looking off over the plains imagined the hosts which once moved over them in shining casques and armor, with trampling steeds and the flashing fanfare of the mediæval pageantry.

After lunch we returned through the Wiltshire lowlands; across green downs, rutted by an old Roman road, within sight of the great White Horse of Westbury; through Savernake Forest to home and supper.

I had never before seen an English forest, and the squat beeches, russet gold in the afternoon light, and the long aisles through the forest, lined with ferns through which rabbits scurried, reminded me of the stories of Robin Hood, and I half expected to see green forms flitting through the twilight. The next morning we returned to autumnal, pallid London.

OUR MENAGERIE

THERE can be no gainsaying the fact that a library and a menagerie are an addition to any home. Animals and books are far more decorative than furniture, and they help to amuse the children. While in moments of extreme anguish a zoo, for instance, such as we possess, is an undeniable source of comfort and delight.

One of the charms of our little collection is its variety. We have two dogs, a cat, a snake, a mouse, a swan, a rabbit, and a horse. We also have rarer specimens, a lion, a tiger, a bison, a giraffe, a duck-billed platypus, and two hippopotami. But the favorites, the ones nearest our hearts, are a family of elephants, Hathi, Kala Nag, Abercrombie, and Little Toomai, ranging in size from a large armful to an easy handful. Our library is equally imposing and contains such treasures as 'Alice in Wonderland,' 'Davy and the Goblin,' 'Robinson Crusoe,' 'The Golden Age,' 'The Jungle

Books,' 'Auton House,' Aldrich's 'Bad Boy,' and a host of other volumes which have become a definite part of our family life.

All these friends have a particular place in our ark. The books live on special shelves in the library; the domestic animals, including the elephants, are stabled in the nursery with Anne. While the more tropical members of our herd, and consequently the more delicate, live on the mantelshelf in the second best bedroom, and are removed only in times of trouble when rainy days make special equatorial expeditions necessary to nursery happiness.

Anne has made a careful inventory of our animal kingdom, and has christened each creature in our little Eden. For instance, there is Barkis the lion, a most willing soul. He has lost his virgin bloom and resembles a rather painfully overstuffed tabby cat with a stubby tail. Ecstasy, a wooden tiger who rolls forward and opens his mouth in paralytic jerks, stands be-

side him. He, poor brute, is the benedict of our little congregation, and from a worn, wooden skull his eyes leer ingratiatingly at any one who deigns him a glance.

In company with Ecstasy, yet stiffly aloof, stands Henrietta, the giraffe. Her spinster soul glares through shallow button eyes, and her stiff maiden neck is tilted at an absurd angle from her body. She is a rather pathetic figure of rigid dictatorial curiosity. Next, though ignoring her completely, coils the arch tempter Bartholomew. Over languorous wooden curves he surveys the world with cynicism. His little eyes glitter, and his forked tongue is extended in perpetual derision between the white wooden fangs which fence his gullet. Beyond him the plaster hippopotami vacuously contemplate their surroundings; conjuring up, we fancy, in their stagnant minds visions of jungle pools and ferns and sleeping crocodiles. The Bison Muriel, in contradistinction to that animal's obvious sex, and the duck-billed platypus, Snow-

drop, named at Anne's special request, occupy each other's rather dull society at the end of the line. They are not favorites, but they are part of us and have a share in our devotion.

That our library and menagerie play a major part in our lives I am convinced. Inanimate as they appear, they exert an active influence on our characters. 'Nonsense,' says Aunt Priscilla who is soul-mate to Henrietta. 'Absurd,' says Uncle Wilbur who directs something or other in the city.

Let me illustrate. The day was Sunday. November rain splashed petulantly against the window-pane. All the dreary helplessness of a Sunday afternoon indoors had settled over us, when at my suggestion we collected our menagerie and arranged an expedition to Africa in the drawing-room, where the carpet is suggestively green. A few upturned chairs did duty for an impenetrable jungle thicket; a mirror on the floor suggested a huge lake rimmed with beaches of gold; while in the corners,

under the sofa, and by the desk, were arranged lairs for our gentle carnivoræ. We even fashioned a river out of a big yellow scarf, and bound its sleepy course between banks of verdant sofa pillows. Here we placed the hippopotami, who failed, I am afraid, to appreciate the lush grandeur of their surroundings.

In this land of promise we enacted a drama of African exploration based on our late reading of Henry M. Stanley's 'Autobiography.' Equipped with rifles, impersonating our own safari, we advanced, no less than a family of Stanleys, over the dry plains towards Lake Victoria. On the way we saw, encountered, and overcame animals and situations known and unknown to Africa. We traversed country, populated by extraordinary specimens of game, where obviously the foot of man had never trod. On arriving at the lake we took monstrous wildfowl, rubber swans, ducks, and Snowdrop, the duck-billed platypus. Here we embarked, after a suit-

able rest, in a river canoe, and on our way to the coast were fortunate enough to capture alive two almost perfect (one had part of his foot missing) hippopotami.

But this is only one illustration of the way in which our library and menagerie have coöperated in saving us from moments of depression and earthly despair. Of course, there are people immune to the stimulus of reading; people to whom Uncle Wilbur is a person of consequence. All this is 'absurd' to them, a word which has become a personality in our family; they have no books and no menageries; they have never been to Africa, and somehow I don't believe they ever will go.

ALL THAT GLITTERS

CHRISTMAS has gone. Dog Corner zoo sleeps under a coverlet of snow. The four goldfish, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, undulate gently in their tank; Paul and Peter, the red snails, industriously ascend the glass walls of their aquarium; our Irish terrier and police dog sleep throatily on the best parlor rugs; Anne is folded into her white bed, my wife is sitting opposite me in the living room with a check book in her lap, and I, full of Christmas cheer, slump in my chair with a writing board across my lap thinking savage thoughts.

Anne believes that Christmas should come at least once a week — a perpetual nativity. I know better. And so do you, wife, with that frown upon your forehead and the life-draining pen tapping the very arteries of our fiscal life. The police dog, Polaris, our latest acquisition, yawns and beats his tail reminiscently upon the carpet. Literary dog. We have just nursed

him through three weeks of distemper in our library. You do well, cur, to remember the novels you gnawed in your nocturnal leisure. Can you taste the gold lettering off the backs of my encyclopedia?

'Remember,' says my wife gently, 'he is only a puppy.'

'But,' say I, 'does he not consume five pounds of raw meat daily?'

'Well, dear,' continues that arch temptress, 'shall we give him away?' A sullen silence, while Polaris chases the rabbits he has never seen through the shadow of his dream.

I change the subject of our conversation to less painful memories. We discuss our daughter. Anne like her father has begun to discover that all that glitters is not gold. Yesterday she attempted flight — just like the fairies, she confessed later. Her first trial was made from the top steps of our front hall staircase, and even Anne voted the experiment a failure. Still I feel that she could ill have spared her

primitive interest in the laws of nature.

The wise are cautious; they have tasted the apple of wisdom. Anne very quickly learned the effects of green fruit. I think that books were responsible for her ultimate sophistication. Through them she discovered the stern dimensions of this unimaginative and implastic world.

Last summer we read the stories of 'Uncle Remus,' by Joel Chandler Harris. Of course if you have never read Uncle Remus, you can never be quite educated. Beyond our house the minions of the state were rebuilding the road which bounds the terraced lawn. Here to Anne's intense satisfaction, they left a barrel of tar in the hot sun. A review of the court-martial brings to light the interesting fact that Anne decided to make a tar baby identical in shape and consistency to that master baby of Bre'er Rabbit. The result of Anne's spiritual and rare yearning towards creative art is that now she wears her hair in a bang across the forehead and very

short along the sides and back. I have read stirring accounts of tar and feathers, I have watched without a quiver flies enmeshed in fly-paper; these leave me cold compared to Anne's dexterous use of sand and tar. We watch Anne's miniature library grow with emotions of fearful anticipation.

Being engaged in literary traffic, I bump into town from Dog Corner on the wings of the morning — a fanciful misrepresentation of our Ford. By this act of Providence my child and her mother are maintained, if not safe and warm, at least with amusing things to read. These books, I feel convinced, uphold me in Anne's estimation on the same plane as Michael, our Irish terrier, whose Gaelic charm would otherwise outshine my Anglo-Saxon stolidity. When our daughter is in bed, my wife and I in council often trace out the mental development which shall mould her character — pleasant but useless twilight dreams interwoven with the thought of immor-

tality in the succession of one generation after another. Experience, alas! teaches the fondest that each mind feeds on what is most suited to it, that happiness is not the answer to this riddle of life, that we are not for long our children's keepers. If Anne elects in life a far different course from the one we have so elaborately planned, may we have the strength to forebear from the violence of interference. We have this consolation: True education is after all self-taught and good books present an opportunity to acquire a broader and more sympathetic understanding of this odd world.

THE WAY OF THE COLLECTOR

THE way of the collector is hard. Margaretta and I began collecting immediately after our marriage, and so far we have gathered under one roof several broken chairs, a bit of questionable Stiegel glass, one decapitated figurine of Chelsea china, which Margaretta declares particularly fine, and several first editions of the most modern writers, such as — but why go into personalities? We have also collected at great personal sacrifice a cook, a dog, a child and a nurse for her — not to mention a house to cover these treasures, and a little plot of ground for the house to stand on.

We are not a wealthy family, but we stare with bold eyes into a future of still more collecting. We began the iniquitous practice with the money people were kind enough to give us as wedding presents, and with this we laid the foundation for our museum and library — may they continue

to prosper! The final results, however, were achieved through labor and persistence. We turned to books for information, we cultivated the friendship of professional dealers. We went to shops and rubbish heaps, and the homes of rich friends — also collectors — and we finally qualified as genuine connoisseurs by purchasing at bargain prices various *objets d'art* which we later discovered were distinctly liable under the true name act.

We do not begrudge our experience. We shall be wiser next time; we shall be more careful. I can picture the future — a long street lined with purple shops, antique dealers standing on their steps bowing as we pass. My wife and I shall be dressed in simple finery, elegance without ostentation, stopping here for brief consultations, giving advice, purchasing a little now and then, followed by our family, the Irish terrier, the nursemaid, and finally the cook, bearing an ancient sauce ladle.

ON ACCOUNT OF OUR LONGING

To-day I wandered in the orchard gathering the spent and withered limbs of our apple trees. With the surgeon's saw and the butcher's axe, attended by our two dogs, I separated the dead from the living. Engaged in this melancholy occupation, for the sky was gray and a February thaw had thinned the threadbare coat of snow covering the elbows of our New England desolation, I thought of a little town in Sussex, England, tucked away among the downs beside a lazy river.

I can remember one gray morning in November when I rose early and went for a long walk over these hills, over a great carpet of gray-brown turf, with the checkered fields of England half-hidden in the mist below. About the middle of the forenoon I came on an old Anglo-Saxon fort — a mound of turf surrounded circle-wise by a shallow depression in the chalk. As I sat down to rest and to enjoy a pipeful of to-

bacco, I thought of ancient Britain. Looking seaward, I could follow the valley penciled by the river to the Channel, and I could see the downs asleep along the coast. Through the pipe smoke which lifted in a cloud around me, I pictured long lines of weary men and crude carts drawn by cattle. For a moment I caught the sullen flash of a beacon fire on ancient hills and watched the tide of Rome flow north.

Another time I stood upon a wooded hill of pines in Italy. To the north rose the Maritime Alps, veined with purple in the sunset, like exquisite porcelain. To the south the blue Mediterranean lay under hills bordered by gray-green olive orchards, and sliced crescent beaches. The sun, setting, caught the red sail of a fisherman's boat making port; far below, on the narrow path which climbed through the hills toward the inland villages, a woman was singing an old folk song as she followed the pack mules. Her voice was clear and true; the loveliest voice, I think, I ever heard.

The muleteer cursed his beasts of burden, the song ceased abruptly, and I descended under the shadow of night through the terraces of olive trees to my hotel.

When I had done with the orchard, I went indoors and sat in quiet by the library shelves reviewing the ties that bound me to Dog Corner and speculating on the future. Here Anne found me, and impertinently usurping my chair, my lap, and my thoughts demanded a story. So I told her an equivocal tale about a good little boy who went to India and was finally and happily digested by a family of tigers.

I want to travel; I want to step with seventy-times-seven-league boots across the gray oceans of this world; I want to escape from my own shadow as it marches westward. I want to be free from the unanswerable and at peace with the present. When my wife finds me in this state of ferment, she wisely and with delicacy of mind leaves me in the library alone.

Revolt simmers to restlessness, and restlessness reaches out a long hand to withdraw from the heavy shelf a few volumes 'still living and more beautiful on account of our longing.'

There is no golden cage in which to imprison tranquillity. When I asked Anne the other day why she sneezed, she looked at me slant-wise out of her gray eyes and said, 'The Lord gave me that.' We stumble and run and climb through the great Valley of the Shadow, like the children of Israel in search of a promised land until out of the wasteland of our despair we come at last to the dark rivers of a profound and everlasting peace.

PIAZZA SAN MARCO

Man has wisely if not too well capitalized beauty. We enjoy nothing, not even the right to live, without paying for it in fees and taxes. This is the privilege of civilization, and the older the state the more pressing the payment. In Venice, while we were on our honeymoon, Margaretta and I were urged to contribute to the upkeep of that lovely city which rises in ancient splendor from the bay. We were tourists, young and innocent; we were also, to the Venetian, a means of livelihood. I spoke no Italian, Margaretta spoke a number of languages unintelligibly, and only our native caution saved us from robbery complete.

The Piazza San Marco is the hub of the Venetian commercial universe. Margaretta and I stood arm in arm and looked down the long colonnade which hems in three sides of the square, lined with little shops and cafés. In front of us stood St. Mark's

Cathedral, the square Campanile, and a portion of that architectural wedding cake, the Ducal Palace. People with cloaks and umbrellas passed to and fro, and a few sat at the little tables which clutter up the promenades outside the cafés. Here we had the adventure of the lace.

The little shop was kept by a good but not a truthful woman. It seems that lace is sold somewhat like meat, only instead of by the pound, by the yard, and that filet, for instance, is worth more than crochet and other choice cuts. The lady, who saw us for what we were, desired our patronage in Italian, and Margaretta, who suffers from a kind heart to which rudeness is abhorrent, cannot speak Italian. Before we really knew what was happening we were confronted by a piece of lace. I shall translate for Madame as I understood her at the time.

Madame: 'This exquisite piece for one hundred lire a metre. It is surely worth double the price!'

Margaretta: 'Si, si, mais je ne désire pas de lace.'

Madame: 'But nowhere is there such lace — so ideal, so perfect, so wonderful for the baby and the underclothes. (*At this point I grow restless, and Margaretta blushes charmingly.*) See, I will give it to you for eighty lire, my lowest concession. It is a gift.'

Margaretta: 'Si, mais j'ai beaucoup de underclothes. C'est pas nécessaire. Mais merci pour me l'avoir montre.' (*She turns away; I walk away.*)

Madame: 'Oh, Madame, you do yourself an injustice, and rob your future children not to take advantage of this my offer. Such lace as mine is indestructible, it is an inheritance. Perceive, I cheat myself. Sixty lire.'

(*Margaretta tries to go but can't express this. She does not wish the lace at any price, but it seems rude to say this to a lady who appears to have her future so much at heart.*)

Margaretta (*to me*): 'Darling.' (*I turn*

my back resolutely; she points towards me, and turns to the lady.) 'Vous pouvez voir. Il ne désire pas que je le achete.'

The rest Margaretta confessed to me shamefacedly this way. 'You see, darling, I couldn't explain I didn't want it, and she offered me half a metre more for the same price, so I bought it to get away.'

One morning Margaretta had another adventure in the Piazza San Marco. While idling along looking into shop windows she was approached by two little urchins, pathetically supporting one another and indicating by their gestures that they were famished. Margaretta for safety's sake had brought no money with her, and all she could do when they begged of her in Italian was to shake her head. The little boys wilted. They opened cavernous mouths and pointed into them with grimy fingers. They besought her vocally with tears and gesticulations. She grew embarrassed at their pertinacity and walked along rapidly, the urchins in pur-

suit. She entered a store, while they remained patiently outside until she reappeared. She said, 'No, no!' to the amusement of passersby and the mournful interest of the little rascals. She spoke phrases of Spanish, Latin, French, and they hung about her still more closely. Finally, desperately and methodically, she began to turn out one pocket after another to show that each was empty. At the conclusion of the ceremony, which had attracted the attention of an enthusiastic gathering, the battered infants uttered a whoop of joy and fled laughing, pointing derisively at their victim. Margaretta, I regret to state, informed me that she answered them with what may at best be interpreted as a vulgar and undignified symbol of disesteem.

Venice has changed sadly since it was centuries ago the leading sea power in the world. To an outsider there is something dignified though pathetic in the old palaces with their rusty, grated windows and ancient portals at the foot of which the canal

waters lap. Nor in most cases is there any attempt to revive the old glory and magnificence.

The day before we left Venice, we visited the shops for the last time. We sighed, at least I did, for meerschaum pipes, lace shawls, bead bags, embossed leather pocketbooks, and imitation jewelry. In a moment of ecstasy, despite Margaretta's disapproval, I went so far as to purchase a sword cane, which I have never carried, and on which my children will in all probability impale themselves. I remember a pipe shop where wonderfully carved meerschaum pipes were displayed. Now, although a meerschaum pipe may be the worst smoke in the world, I soothed Margaretta's sense of economy by retailing to her the fabulous prices paid at home for these works of art. We went into the shop together, and questioned the proprietor with gestures dignified and threatening. At his prices we sneered with supercilious but well-bred contempt. To his explana-

tions we appeared bored and knowing. We so affected his morale that in desperation he asked us to set our own prices. I mentioned a sum fifty lire below his last figure, for the beautifully carved head of a swashbuckling brigand, and we concluded our bargain. Later I was foolish enough to take the pipe to an English tobacconist — alas, that a masterpiece should have been wrought in second-grade meerschaum! I shall deceitfully leave it as an heirloom to my children, imitation amber mouthpiece and all! The next day we left for the Italian Riviera.

SILVER GOATS

I MET a satyr the other day. He was sitting on the stump of an apple tree, a Dog Corner apple tree which failed to survive the winter. His eyes peered slyly at me along his nose and his lips were curved in a sardonic grin. 'Hullo,' I said, and moved sideways to see if his ears were pointed. Goat boy said nothing, but rose and gamboled away. I thought with a sudden ache to be over the hills and far away, of Pan and Italy. But Dog Corner is Dog Corner, U.S.A., no more no less, so I whistled up my Irish terrier and went indoors to talk the matter over with my wife.

We both agreed on our restlessness of late. Each day we watch with kindling interest the buds on the wet brown branches of our orchard. When the first pale flush of green announces spring beyond a doubt, we shall all become delirious with joy. Some day my wife and I plan to escape our New England winter and embark for coral

strands and golden sands. We shall incorporate our entire family into a Ulysses Society, Ltd., and conduct an informal Odyssey.

Several years ago when Margaretta and I were spending a long vacation in England we did wander with a certain blind innocence round Europe for a month or two. It was during this trip we had the adventure with the seven white goats all of whom had extravagant Italian names.

Margaretta and I travel with a little crowd of books. We sit in the whirlwind and direct the storm. This particular afternoon we were lying out in a sunny solitude which overlooked the Mediterranean and the gray olive orchards of the Riviera. Along the coast we could see the town of San Remo and its neighboring villages, and behind us the hill slopes were given over to carnations and olives. We rested almost in the shadow of the little church which commanded the promontory in the name of God. I was reading, I remember,

the works of Sarah Orne Jewett and annoying Margaretta by declaiming on their excellence, when seven white goats appeared one after the other. They came from nowhere up the face of the cliff, and stared at us out of hard yellow eyes. They were beautifully, spotlessly white, and the leader of the flock looked like the incarnation of Pan. 'Goats,' said Margaretta nervously, 'go away.'

Silence passed between us. Then the ewes in back dropped their heads and began to graze, neatly cropping the ragged hill grass. But Pan and another buck, presumably his son Silenus, drew near, their eyes aglitter with curiosity. I cautioned Margaretta to preserve the peace, and we waited expectantly to see what the gods of the mountain would do. Beyond us in the grass lay the knapsack in which we carry papers, spilt open in a rich confusion of books and manuscript, chiefly poems of mine, unwept, unhonored, and unsung. Pan approached, looked at us, rotated the

cud of his reflection, and cautiously read the verses displayed in front of him. First he nibbled at a long epic, but finding it tasteless he turned to a volume of Miss Jewett. 'My dear,' whispered Margaretta boldly, 'what discernment.' At this point Silenus, waking from a mazy dream, rebuked his father in a most unfilial manner. Pan drew back, the gods bowed head to head, and then proceeded to enact in pantomime the history of their prejudices and opinions.

Margaretta and I were fascinated by this elaborate minuet of war. Silver goats by a silver-blue sea. Even the ewes lifted their wisely foolish heads, and stared with uncurious, lozenge-pupiled eyes. But before the dance was ended, a sound of someone's scrambling approach announced an intruder. He appeared over the edge of the hill, a small Italian boy in ragged garments carrying in one hand a staff. Daphnis stood for a moment looking at us, and then, calling on each goat by name,

swept his little flock back over the rim of the hill, and so out of sight. We heard the rattle of pebbles; the shrill voice of the young shepherd die away. I collected all my poems which showed a tendency to stray with the wind, and buckled the flap of our knapsack. 'Dear,' said my wife proudly exhibiting the mangled corpse of Miss Jewett's 'The Country of the Pointed Firs,' 'this is evidently the latest form of literary criticism.'

'Quite,' said I brightly. 'You must admit that indigestion is the sincerest form of flattery.'

SIMPLE SARAH

We have passed that period of doubt, when, the snow gone, the fields lie bare and unresponsive to the first hesitating warmth of spring as though Nature herself, winter weary, had given up the struggle to rekindle life in her numb body. Spring long delayed has come at last. We spend the evenings at Dog Corner in husbanding the earth, ploughing miniature furrows for the seed, spading and manuring the soil, and crawling like strange earth-creatures on hands and knees over our garden surface to pluck at the host of weeds which march in from sky and land and sea to take possession of our hard-won independence. Even the lawn which drops away in three short terraces to the road, is given over to the bright medallions of the dandelion. Anne, soil encrusted, lends us her misplaced enthusiasm, and with tireless energy tramps the garden furrows and digs among the seeded vegetables.

One evening not long ago when Margaretta and I were engaged in inviting our souls after a Sabbath of toil, we discussed a lady who had recently left our humble employ. She was a white-haired soul who ambled through life in a willing daze. Each morning she wandered through our rooms flicking the dust from the furniture with a limp rag, or escorted the vacuum cleaner up and down the stairs. Alas, one could follow in her train marking generous initials on the tables and underneath the chairs with a blackened finger. Poor soul, her life was a barren dream in which a husband figured who had once been kind to her but who now was dead. When we remonstrated with her for her carelessness, she would apologize humbly and explain that she was used to being petted.

The pity which Margaretta and I felt was largely, I suppose, the reflection of our images in a similar position. Of the world but not fitted for it, the accident of birth and opportunity is at times a handicap

too great for many of us. Sarah left with a quiet dignity which pierced our armor of self-interest, and made life in one profound instant seem merciless and cruel. To Sarah, however, it was one more unreasoned failure which she accepted with a certain benign, courageous imbecility. While Margaretta and I were talking about this I saw the world in which we lived broken into a series of disassociated fragments in which all personality was lost and absorbed in a stream of conflict. With an almost magical clearness I saw life not as a unit, but as a ferment of hopelessly antagonistic forces of which animal life was the sport. It was like a terrible dream in which, the protection of conceit and self-interest being torn away, the spirit was left helpless and alone. It is such a sudden vision that makes understandable the egotism and unhappiness of nearly all sensitive people. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher.

Last night when I was rooting like a pig

for truffles in the dirt of an almost forgotten closet, I was startled by the hollow impact of wood, mingled with a feminine scream. Leaping like a frightened rabbit downstairs I discovered that my wife had severely dented our best drawing-room furniture with her golf clubs. 'My dear,' I said, 'what on earth is this awful racket?' and then I took the clubs and swung them gracefully over the carpet, the same carpet which not a year ago I cut into small ribbons by a misplaced mashie shot. There is no doubt about it, spring is here.

EXPERIENCE

ANNE and I are in revolt against experience.

When you know more, our garden seems to jeer, you will enjoy a richer harvest. When you have lived longer, the orchard waves its branches airily, you will appreciate the influence of sprays and fertilizer on the apple crop. Even reputable friends suggest that time will cure my enthusiasm for non-utilitarian tasks.

Anne and I are digging out an old well that we found in a remote corner of the apple orchard beside the ruins of a now departed cellar. For two days we struggled with débris and rock until we were finally rewarded by getting our feet wet in the pit we had excavated. Despite the jeers of the rest of the family, our task is almost complete, and at present yawns as a menace to the unwary, as Anne who has fallen down the shaft twice can testify.

In the meantime my wife upbraids me

for neglecting the garden. There is something bitterly complacent in forcing reluctant vegetables to grow. In some future life beyond experience, I hope to recline upon a shaded lawn and watch carrots, beets, onions, cabbages, and lettuce garden themselves in Heavenly rows. When I am tired of this sight, as I most certainly shall be in a few moments, I shall spend the time between lunch and dinner leaping from planet to planet to work up an appetite and to see what goes on in the Universe. And I shall take Anne with me.

From what a multiplicity of wonders experience keeps us. We take life for granted, reduce education to a mathematical formula, keep our eyes firmly focused on the toes of our boots, and tramp down the road of our life cycle, dust to dust. There is much to be said for looking down fearful abysses, when the inexpressible magnitude of this multi-dimensional world falls like a shadow across our awareness, and we realize for a moment the hopeless

incompetency of all pert slogans, and easy formulæ. Is life any the less real to the madman?

'My dear,' says my wife (women are more practical than men), 'will you cut the asparagus for dinner?' I admire the blind enthusiasm of asparagus. Without a doubt history has confused the story of the man who first discovered this vegetable with that of Jason who sowed dragon's teeth and reaped the green spears of a marching host.

Having entered my plea for digging out old wells, it is only fair to suggest that life can be made richer by the test of experience, and that the wise make judicious use of it. We learn not to take ourselves too seriously and to respect the rights of others, and discover that this prosaic world demands penalties for the infraction of certain simple principles. Alas that there is a tendency abroad to make capital of this innocent discovery. Moralists create tortuous détours out of the strait and nar-

row, and almost every one has a repulsive specific for human frailty.

Experience is the lantern lighting us along a shadowed and unfamiliar highway. We cannot see either the beginning or the end of our pilgrimage; we do not understand the impulse which impels us; we scarcely recognize the millions traveling the same uncertain way. Like the stars which march across the sky at night, we advance on our mysterious journey by the only light which has been vouchsafed to us.

SISTER ALUM

THE informal Emerson, the Emerson of the Journals, is so much more lovable than the finished Essayist of Concord. I was reading last night 'The Heart of Emerson's Journals' prepared by Bliss Perry, and came across this homely paragraph. 'A man must have aunts and cousins, must buy carrots and turnips, must have barn and woodshed, must go to market and to the blacksmith's shop, must saunter and sleep and be inferior and silly.' Substitute garage for blacksmith's shop, and our life at Dog Corner is much the same. Occasionally, however, we are favored with a miracle.

When Anne was three we had an addition to our family. I refer to her older sister Alum. Alum, although not one of us has seen her, sprang like Athena from the forehead of Zeus fully equipped for life. She lives in town, has a husband who farms, and four children, two boys and

two girls. Alum, favored with amazing sapience and strength, bears a charmed life; she does all the things that Anne would like to do — never goes to bed, never has her face washed, never is penalized for errors of judgment, and is always ready for any expedition my daughter proposes. In short Alum is a prodigy, and I sigh with envy when I think of her and beg Anne to give me further hints into her miraculous existence.

We know more about Alum than we know about our intimate friends. We know her birthday and her telephone number and the color of the automobile she drives. She is the sought after guest whose visits are indefinitely postponed until to-morrow. But one day I feel sure we shall all be united under one roof. Alum, you were conceived to comfort us in affliction. Life is richer for your presence in the background of our consciousness.

I am told that Alum is beautiful. But

beauty ripens and fades and so is forgotten among the dusts of memory. I thought of this as I was hoeing the asparagus bed. Spring has been with us; beauty is brief. Looking out of the window I see the ragged lawn no longer golden with dandelions. Eternal only in that it once was. Art is the bridge by means of which the observer communicates his impressions and comments to the world, the bridge across which pass ideas, the ultimate reality. Alum is Anne's work of art.

THIS SHADOW

THE world about Dog Corner is moist after a week of April rain and there is the pleasant smell of wet wood in the air. On such a bright day as this two or more years ago Anne discovered her shadow marching beside her up the green lawn. She had been chasing a croquet ball and was returning in triumph to the garden path when she suddenly became aware of the stranger at her side. Anne stopped short and stared down at the shadow which lay servile and impudent at her feet. She moved forward experimentally and again stopped. Then she bent low to brush the intruder from her lawn; but except for a monstrous contortion her familiar remained impassive on the sod. Then I think she realized for the first time that the shadow belonged to her and that with difficulty she could escape it.

Anne straightened up to take refuge in the house, when yet more terrible, the

shadow leapt before her across the threshold. Anne promptly sat down in the door and turned away her head. I watched her, and cruelly said nothing to see if she would cry or come to me for assistance. Of course she did what most children do. She sat for a moment or two lost in thought. Then apparently having decided the problem to her satisfaction, she returned to the flower beds and the decoration of her stubby features with garden loam (alas, a favorite occupation). Since that time I doubt if she has given the matter much consideration, save for an occasional question and a few derisive posturings to her shadow's humiliation and her consequent gratification.

But I doubt if, in a figurative sense, we ever forget our shadows, if they ever cease to live with us, march through doors ahead of us, or stretch their giant strides beside us in the twilight. Except for the trivial accidents of fate, we might quite easily be other than we seem; only our shadows aping our manners and our thoughts are

eternal and true. We recognize them everywhere, in the scenery about us, in our sympathies and friendships, in the books we read, the music we hear, the plays we see, until unconsciously we acknowledge that, vague and misshapen, they are ours, and that we are theirs. Usurping mind and imagination they become more real, more vivid than anything in our experience, and personify in robes of immortality our ideals and religions. Words are the shadows of meaning, thoughts are the shadows of souls, and life is the shadow of some greater urgency. My wife who, like most women, lives closer to this rag-bag world, impertinently suggests that the food we eat is but the shadow of our grocer's bill.

Montaigne speaks of life as: 'A noble farce, wherein kings, republics, and emperors have for so many ages played their parts, and to which the whole vast universe serves for a theatre.' We play a double part as actors and audience, tragedy and comedy; fascinated by what is, speculating on

what was and what yet may be. In other lives we see the shadow of our own. The glimpses which we catch of ourselves in newspapers, plays and books round out experience richly and so have a place in our existence. Even the enduring productions of art are, after all, only the expression of great commonplaces, commonplaces that do not change from one generation to another. Teachers, philosophers, and religious leaders who stimulate us to a fresh insight into life, point out the unguessed reality of what we already know. We do not understand the unusual; our asylums are full of its prophets, our histories are full of its failures. We live in the shadow, suspicious of the light, kindling torches and then snuffing them out with impatient hands, crying aloud for freedom, peering down into the abysses of our own consciousness, struggling forward eternally in search of that radiance which casts no shadow and which is the answer to all mysteries.

READING FOR PLEASURE

My wife, who is quite a charming person, contends that one should read solely for pleasure. 'My dear,' she said impishly after I had been scolding her for reading some particularly light fiction, 'even your old friend, Doctor Johnson, admits it. "Sir," said he' (here she ruffled her voice threateningly and drew her eyebrows together), '"a man ought to read just as his inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good."'

At first I was tempted to deny such heresy, believing that mental as well as physical character was based on discipline. And so it is, Ass Ears, I say to myself; but it is self discipline actuated by our most profound inclinations. I can remember when I first read the Bible with a shiver of pleasure; when Milton ceased to be a text book and Shakespeare an unmitigated affliction. How many crimes have been committed in thy name, dark-eyed Goddess of

Education. I must confess that even now when I pick up for the first time one of the so-called classics, I get an unexpected and bewildered start of pleasure in discovering life and beauty within the ornate and chill tomb of righteous appreciation.

If I confess my fondness for the past, I must also admit my admiration for the present. The world of science is making startling conquests over matter, just as the world of letters is making converts out of men who a generation or two ago would have been brought up in almost total ignorance of the written word. It is extraordinary when one comes to think of the new ideas which one learns from books. They are the word made light; friends, philosophers, and guides. But all books are not good books, just as all friends are not true, all philosophers wise, or all guides trustworthy. Books, my wife says, are the eye-glasses of civilization and each man must be his own oculist. After all, wisdom is only to be learned through experience and observation.

When the world is too much with us, books bring peace and consolation; when the world seems beyond our grasp, they draw it closer for examination and exploration. Through books we travel not only into all corners of the known world, but back into the past. They bring new thoughts, fresh inspiration, and above all pleasure — the inward glow which comes from reading good books, seeing good pictures, and listening to good music.

'The educational value of books' has been exploited to such an extent that this rather obvious truth is almost completely obscured behind advertising appeals either to gaucherie, sex attraction, or cupidity. Some such thing as 'Read in the bath ten minutes a day and grow rich' is printed daily, with appropriate solemnity, all through our newspapers, literary supplements, and magazines. And there are those, as well, who improve their minds by reading fashionable books, though not too exhaustively, who are 'up' on the latest

novels, and who approve of things in print they condemn in practice.

My wife thoughtfully pointed this type out to me the other evening as I was struggling through a very badly written novel. 'Why bore yourself, darling, by reading that book,' she suggested rather maliciously, 'when you can discuss it so much better if you are not prejudiced by the author?' After all the reader is under no obligation to either publisher or author, which brings us back to Dr. Johnson's 'a man ought to read just as his inclination leads him.'

DOWN TO THE SEA

I AM almost, but not quite, a stranger to the sea. Indeed as I look back on the only salt water voyage I ever personally conducted, our association was quite intimate. In seven days of actual cruising we were beached on a sand bar twice, nearly capsized by a thunder squall, set afire, storm bound in a heavy northeast gale, and finally fog bound all night only to be becalmed the next evening with a ten-mile row home to Marblehead on empty stomachs.

There were three of us aboard, Charles and I and the Lad of the Law. We set out one July morning in the Doreen, an eighteen-foot knockabout, well supplied with food and expectations, and early in the evening of that same day ran her high and dry on a sand bar in the Ipswich River. When she floated off again about two o'clock in the morning, we hoisted sail with a great deal of difficulty, dropped down the river, and anchored innocently

under the lee of the sand spit which makes for one side of the shallow bay. We lay here over night, and despite the fact that we had been informed that there was plenty of water to float us, awoke next morning at an acute angle and had to wait until eleven when we could float again and continue our Odyssey. There is no more Jonah-in-the-belly-of-the-whale feeling than trying to sleep in a small boat which is high and dry on its side. We left Ipswich with relief and headed gayly up the coast singing, 'We won't go home any more.' And we very nearly didn't.

We drifted peacefully on our way for an hour or two until the sight of heavy clouds and the sound of thunder interrupted a desultory game of poker in the cockpit. We took two reefs in the mainsail, donned our oilskins, and waited to see what would happen. The sky pursed up its lips and grew purple in the face. 'Apoplexy has nothing on this,' I thought, and looked nervously at the rigging. Then we saw the

wind coming across the water in a smother of white foam. I yelled to the boys to let go the halyards and headed the Doreen into it. For a minute life was one fleeting spasm. The wind struck the Doreen and killed our headway, then blew us sideways and heeled us over so that the water roared into the cockpit. I looked back at the dingy in time to see a gust of wind lift it out of the water, but fortunately it did not capsize. We gathered in as much of the mainsail as we could in a crude attempt to furl it, and waited helplessly for the blow to pass as we scudded along under bare poles. In fifteen minutes the storm had passed, and we drifted lazily into Portsmouth harbor with the evening breeze and anchored below the old fort at Kittery Point. There is a deep sense of spiritual comfort in making safe harbor at night. Three or four times later we were to sigh with relief when the anchor rope was paid out and we had our hook on the bottom and our sails furled on deck.

The next day we sailed East with a strong northwesterly wind, and one reef in the mainsail. As the Doreen had been in the water only a day or two before we started, she leaked a little, and as we smashed along through a choppy sea it was necessary for one of us to stay below and pump her out. The swirl of white water along the deck, the slop of spray, the shiver of the mainsail, and the hum of the wind among the stays thrilled us with a sense of exaltation as we made the headlands along the coast, and then dropped them astern and finally out of sight. That night we rested in Kennebunkport.

The following day we made Small Point, Maine — the country of the pointed firs. As we were drifting between the islands of Casco Bay, the Lad of the Law, in an attempt to warm up a fry pan full of beans, set the galley afire. There was a rush of flame, a yelp of excitement, and the sizzle of our fire extinguisher. When the gas cleared we went below and found that the

denatured alcohol tap had been left on, and that the copper pan beneath the stove was awash with alcohol. Late in the evening we anchored in the little harbor and prepared to spend a day in peace while the Lad of the Law went ashore to call on a Phantom Lady forty miles or more away. Beyond a vague hint that she lived inland and was fabulously beautiful we were unable to uncover any further information.

Charles and I spent the afternoon in athletic sports, after the ancient fashion of the Greeks. On a neighboring beach tucked in privately between two rock promontories, we divested ourselves of what little clothing we wore and engaged one another in tests of strength and prowess, putting the rock, leaping, short dashes, swimming, and hop, skip and jump. I can visualize now the bright sand underfoot, the fir-covered islands, and the bold rocks against which the sea broke in lazy jets of white foam. By the time we were ready to return

to the Doreen a sharp wind blowing in from the ocean made the surface of the little harbor uncommonly rough for our Nicæan bark. We spent a miserable night on board cooped up in the stuffy cabin and were only too glad to answer the Lad of the Law's hail at four o'clock the next morning. He, unhappy swain, had walked during the night from Bath to Small Point, a matter of some sixteen miles, because he had missed the last stage and had no money to spend for a room in a hotel. At seven o'clock we weighed anchor and set our compass course, homeward bound.

When one has been down to the sea in ships, one sees the force of such a slogan as 'back to the land.' We laid our course to Portland Light. There is something exhilarating in the quick motion of a small sailboat, the sharp slap of waves, the thrum of rigging, and the hazy blue panorama of the coast line. In the intervals between long tricks at the tiller we lounged in the shadow of the deckhouse

and I for one renewed my acquaintance with Melville's 'Moby Dick,' the strange, profound, unholy chase of the great white whale, the greatest book ever written by an American, one of the great novels this world has seen. Steamers put out to-day from ports and return dragging dead whales like sausages in tow, but the full-rigged ship, with its great whaleboats, has gone forever. Gone forever like the days of our western plainsmen. Gone but for their gravestones — books, books, books that shall never crumble or perish utterly.

Late in the afternoon the light breeze died, and as we raised Cape Porpoise we debated whether we should make Biddeford Pool Harbor, or hold on down the coast. Caution ruled, and we headed for the little harbor, the entrance of which is screened by Wood Island from Saco Bay. We were just rounding the island to run in and anchor when a blind fog swept in. It seemed to rise suddenly from the water

itself, and blew about us in thick opaque folds. Charles hastily improvised a sounding lead, and we coasted forward trusting in blind Providence. Suddenly the bleak side of a barge took shape out of the fog, and we put the tiller hard over and dropped anchor. All that night we lay restlessly in the little cabin wondering whether we were in the harbor mouth and whether we should be cut down in the dark. To add to our uneasiness a sullen wind rose and our anchor began to drag.

Two days we loafed about Biddeford Pool while the fog held. On the third day the wind came from the northeast, and the fog was blown to sea. At twelve o'clock we hoisted sail, despite the rain that fell from the slate-gray sky, and ran down the coast before the wind — one man at the wheel, two others crouched in the cabin playing Canfield. As the afternoon wore on the wind rose in ugly gusts, and the heavy seas broke sullenly into dull foam. The small barometer fell, and we decided

that the safest course was to make port before early night caught us at sea.

Neddick Harbor is tucked behind a small promontory of land which juts out slightly into the ocean north of Cape Neddick. It enjoys a nine-foot rise in tide, and is barely protected from the sea by a submerged barrier of rock. As a harbor it has little to recommend it, for the river which feeds into the little bay is shallow and unlovely. Here we anchored under the lee shore, and after furling the sails rowed ashore for supper.

When we returned uneasily to our dingy half an hour later, we saw several men grouped on the shore looking at the Doreen and commenting on the probability of her early destruction. By now the waves working around the barrier reef were breaking in the little harbor, and our ship rolled petulantly, chafing on her anchor rope. We launched the little tender, stripped off all unnecessary clothes, and climbed aboard. By this time the strong tide racing

out to sea made our short journey extremely stimulating. As each wave broke, we would swing the dingy head on into the crest, inching slowly along towards the boat. When we got on board we let go the second anchor, and paid out all the rope we had, wrapping it with towels where it chafed in the chocks.

That night we slept at a near-by hotel, and in the morning journeyed to the harbor to see if the Doreen still lived. Although the storm held, our little craft had survived, and during the afternoon we went on board again. That night the wind held us sideways to the sea and the sharp roll churned our stomachs into a distaste for life, rolled us over in our wide bunks, while the rain seeped through the deck into our upturned and unhappy faces.

We rested impatient in Neddick Harbor for three wet days, and then the storm broke, and we hoisted sail once more. It was late in the afternoon when the mainsail filled, the sheets were trimmed, and the

wake behind curled into matted green ripples. Shadow filled the hollows of the waves. We debated before supper whether we should make Portsmouth or stand out into Ipswich Bay and cross at night. Boredom overcame prudence. As the evening deepened we lit our running lights, read the log, and laid out our course upon the chart. Night closed slowly, the breeze held and soon we were off the Isles of Shoals and could see the shore lights many miles astern. Near at hand the great light on the Isles of Shoals winked monstrously in the dark.

There is something terrifying in sailing at night in a small boat. Fog shut us in about ten o'clock and we were alone in the uncertain dark. From the tiller the riding lights cast weird shadows which raced up the fluttering mainsail. The ocean became a part of the night — the shuddering lift of the ground swell, the slap of water against the hull, the sleek blackness of the depths we could not fathom,

gave us the impression of blind immensity, of being poised in an uncertain infinity. While every now and then the wail of a steamer passing up the coast, like a lost demon howling through space, kept us alive to the danger of our position. Once a whale sounded with an abysmal sigh, not far astern. Then the wind failed us and we drifted in circles.

The next day we slipped through a translucent fog which drove by us in a gray shifting vapor. At eleven o'clock we came on Cape Ann suddenly out of the rising mist. All that day we drifted along the coast under a blazing sun. Charles discovered that the larder was empty, since we had set out from Neddick in a hurry, and we ate unhappily cold beans, and shared a bottle of sarsaparilla, all that remained. At six o'clock we lay off Baker's Island, eight miles from Marblehead. The wind had died, and we drifted for an hour or more in an aimless circle. At seven we tossed a coin to see who should stay on

board while the others rowed to Marblehead. I lost and stayed on board, while Charles and the Lad of the Law set out for home. One hour passed, two, three. My back ached with a blistering sunburn where I had been unwise enough to peel off my shirt; my stomach cried for food; my spirit for comfort. At ten o'clock I heard a launch approaching; wearily and without emotion I began to stow the jib and furl the mainsail. Overhead the stars laughed.

BACK TO THE LAND

MARGARETTA and I have just returned from the woods we love even better than the apple trees of Dog Corner. After a brief vacation we have come back with Anne and Michael, our Irish terrier, to domestic trouble, to beds and hot baths and Olive, the Ford. In short, we have resumed the hair shirt of civilization, business hours, accounts, and our balance at the bank. For the past month we ate with careless disregard for our digestions; we stirred our red blood by long walks in the great open spaces of Maine; we caught credulous trout in incredibly eloquent lakes and watched the wild wood's creatures go about their wild wood ways. Anne learned to paddle a canoe; Michael to respect porcupines; Margaretta to eschew skunks; and I not to walk with hornets. In the bargain I grew a beard, a wild, wind-blown tangle of coarse red hair which lay in patches along my jowls, and, to quote

Margaretta, which made me terrible and queer. Swift be thy flight!

We love the woods for their endless variety, the pine and spruce, the hemlock swamps and hardwood ridges; for all the creatures that inhabit them; for the lakes that lie between ridges; and for the berry patches in old logging clearings. This year we discovered a number of toadstools with brilliant crimson tops and cream-colored stems that looked as though they were made out of the finest suede leather; we also became intimate with a family of porcupines, a solemn heavy-footed crew who ambled stuffily about a few old lumber shacks a mile or more from camp. We made the acquaintance of many deer, a mink, a fox, a beaver, and certain velvet wood mice with round gnome-like eyes. To Anne's horrid pleasure we crossed one day the tracks of several black bears, and two moose, and for twenty-four hours at least she would not leave camp unescorted.

The way to our camp is difficult, *per*

aspera ad astra. We were ferried seven miles across a lake to the river, where we took to our canoes, and poled upstream for thirteen miles to the Falls. Here the tote-road joins the river, and we journeyed eleven miles by buckboard over this old logging road to the camps which cluster at one end of a small island lake. In our own township are eleven ponds all connected by trails, most of which have canoes on them and all of which are full of speckled trout. On a summer evening, when the fish are rising well, the surface of the water is broken as though by a steady invisible rain where the feeding fish break water in pursuit of the evening hatch of flies.

In camp we were not ungrateful for a day when the sky was overcast and the green leaves took on a dull wet finish. On such days I sat indoors by the warm stove, pipe in mouth, and listened to the rain pattering down the roof. The sense of well-being and security, of warmth and

pleasurable languor, became almost tangible. I read books a brilliant day would deny me, unfinished odds and ends of things which I could not leave at home untasted.

I remember one rainy day in New Brunswick when my brother and I had spent most of the morning and afternoon hugging a cracked stove in an old lumber camp which we had happened on in our travels. As we sat conversing, a partridge drummed in the spruce thicket behind the camp, and we went out into the cold, clean afternoon rain to look for him. The woods were damp; underfoot the leaves and needles of many seasons lay over the ground in a rich brown confusion, broken into short avenues by rotting logs streaked and jacketed in green moss; overhead the leaves and fir needles glistened in varying shades of green; damp tree trunks, spruce and birch, exhaled a fresh odor of uncut wood. We came upon the cock without much difficulty, strutting an old log with

quick jerky strides. Suddenly he stopped and faced in our direction. We did not move. He drew himself together, head held high, spread the shoulders of his wings slightly and drew them forward and upward sharply. A muffled thump sounded as though a man struck a muted drum. Slow at first, and then, as his wings beat the air faster and faster, the call merged from a series of dull strokes into a rumble of continuous sound. The cock when he had done, strutted his satisfaction, neck feathers ruffled, steps alive with nervous energy. I shall remember the brown woods, the brown bird, the rotted logs, the comforting green moss, and the rain dripping from still wet branches. Life is a parade in which we all participate for a time.

Margaretta and I have returned to Dog Corner with a number of incredible stories chiefly to do with the size of fish. Certain of our friends have returned with similar tales all musty with the odor of truth about them. In a measure we are

glad to be back. Anne has already laid out seven log cabins in the orchard; I have pulled the bigger weeds out of the garden and ordered a cider press, and Margaretta has begun unpacking the camphored paper bundles and packages which spell winter. Yet I think we all remember, even Michael, our last journey across the lake on our way out. Autumn had crept along the shore, spreading a tapestry of red and yellow over the hardwood ridges, the lake glowed with the sunset, and we were all quiet. It was at this moment that Anne undertook to drop a buck's antler overboard which she had found and had been treasuring for months. Our sense of desolation was complete.

SOLITUDES

O PHILOSOPHIC Thoreau, I too retired from care to seek among the New Hampshire woods the life of the spirit and the freedom from hay fever. In a log cabin under the shadow of a mountain range, I lived and did my cooking, accompanied by Michael, our Irish terrier.

Mice were our neighbors, the sky our guardian, the rattle of dishes in the dish-pan our music, and the aromatic smell of burning wood our incense. Each morning I rose shivering, bundled newspapers and cracked shingles into the stove and set the kettle on to boil. Then encasing my trembling legs and arms in woolen clothes, and dashing a few generous handfuls of water over my brow, I would begin the day with coffee, boiled eggs, and golden corn bread. What corn bread! My own culinary genius conceived, mixed and beat it; watched it rise light and golden in the pan. Mice have died for it, dogs

have prayed for it, and men have eaten it.

As I sat by the stove, the enamel dishes set before me on the cook-shack table, a book in one hand and Michael eyeing me tenderly from the floor, it was given me to reflect on this strange thing called life. If only the Eternal Mixer of Souls had watched me delicately assembling my radiant bread of corn meal, encouraged and heartened by the sight, He might have fashioned us as generously: we, too, might have possessed the same lightness, and God-given purposefulness.

Each morning I devoted to the composition of winged words, but the afternoon was given over to wandering slowly through the woods. I climbed mountains that looked down upon other mountains, valleys, and man-made pasture lands. I saw leaden sheeted lakes, and lying on my back watched levelled clouds. I slept, sucked oranges, and thought with a careless grandeur. Moses sought the moun-

tains for his Commandments. 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.'

The woods were changing — the mountains jutted up through their worn covering of leaves; the early mornings were steel gray with frost, the nights cold and still. At the end of a long day I would return, light the lamps, fire the stove and the logs in the fireplace, and set about the business of supper. After supper, dishwashing and dishwiping, a pipe, and a letter written. Then in a chair before the great stone fireplace of our camp I would read each evening until, the fire dying, the cold crept in and drove me remorselessly to my sleeping bag. Wrapped in the warm blankets, the terrier at my feet, I would blow out the kerosene lamp and listen to the light scurrying night noises, testing the autumn chill outside with the tip of my nose.

That is life, and I enjoy living. Even the tragedy of the mouse who went bathing in my milk bottle failed to stir me,

although I confess I ate breakfast with a faint detachment. *De mortuis nihil nisi bonum.* Carefully I gave him burial in the thin garden behind the cabin between two clumps of dead black-eyed susans. Reverently I laid back the scrawny soil and laid him in the sandy pit. Then motioning Michael, who knows no reverence, away, I stamped down the clean earth with my foot. Thy last long sleep, O Mouse! *Salutamus te morituri.*

ANTICIPATING CHRISTMAS

When we were very young November lay like a shadow before the great event of Christmas. Odd shapes and packages bulged in mysterious and forbidden closets, and at tea time while we gathered about the nursery fire the flames flickering up the chimney would chant: 'Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November.' Each night we went to bed grateful that one more day had passed, and that we were twenty-four hours closer to Christmas Eve.

Now that we are no longer young, my wife and I have handed on the old traditions to Anne, supplying substance for the torch of her enthusiasm. And as our years increase we find an added pleasure in our responsibilities, which include a row or more of nephews, nieces, and cousins whose round faces are raised expectantly to ours. Who could refuse their appeal, do as you would have been done by! The elms at

Dog Corner shall never shelter the unfaithful.

The problem of gifts at Christmas has driven us to take shelter in the leisurely days of November when my wife does her holiday shopping. At this season, so Margaretta assures me, Olive, the Ford, steams briskly from shop to shop with an air of paintless pride. We are well known at several bookstores, where we make our Christmas selections from new and old favorites.

Margaretta and I believe in giving books at all seasons of the year and particularly at Christmas. Books are the source from which education must flow; they direct us through life, provide us with ideals, amuse us in our leisure, and comfort us in trouble. We feel that the feeding of young minds is a problem equal to the feeding of young bodies. We have a credo which may be summarized crudely as follows: There should be good books of all kinds in the house, books not too involved for the littlest nor too youthful for the rapidly expanding

minds of older children. Above all, they should be books that children really want to read — and there are more of these than most people realize.

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